# The PULPIT

*A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching*

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*Young Ministers Number*


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*Contributed by Readers of* **THE PULPIT**

### Celestial Reckoning

Some of the most amazing stories of the war have come out of the experiences of men who fly thousands of miles in huge, long range planes. Through fair weather or foul, over land or sea, flying high or low, they take their plane to its destination and bring it back within an error radius of fifteen miles or four minutes flying time. It is the job of the navigator to perform this modern miracle. With sextant, chronometer, wind-drift meter, air speed indicator, compass, slide rule and celestial almanac he can tell where the plane is flying at any given moment. There are four different kinds of navigation, but three of them have some definite limitations and can be used only under certain flying conditions. At times of stress, moments of uncertainty and waverings of doubt the navigator can resort to the highest branch of his craft, celestial navigation. Up above the clouds are fixed stars which at any given moment are over an exact and recorded position on the earth. From his instruments and the use of mathematics the navigator has a sure and certain guide to his destination.

Are there fixed stars in the moral firmament which can be used to guide us through life's journey? It is true that moral ideals and ideas have grown through the years and change with generations but the point is that they are fixed enough to be used by our day for our struggle. Even the celestial almanac has to be revised and rewritten but it is used daily as a guide to thousands of navigators all over the world.

When the storms of life batter us about and clouds of grief, sorrow and frustration obliterate the familiar landmarks, how much we need fixed points of reference! We need to rise up out of ourselves and get our bearings. We need the help of divine guidance. We are in the midst of a world revolution and we are going some place in a hurry. But where are we now and where are we going? Do we have a sense of direction in the midst of this tremendous social upheaval through which we are now passing? Perhaps it would be well for us, at this time of confusion, to try "celestial reckoning."—*Frank A. Sharp, First Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

### 'The Fellowship Is Unbroken'

Dr. E. Stanley Jones reports from a meeting in Denver an illustration of the persistent fellowship attained through the Christian religion in this time of war and hatred: "A Christian Japanese girl sang a solo entitled, 'How Beautiful Are the Feet of Those Who Bring Tidings of Peace,' before the vast audience. I watched the audience to see what the reaction would be. I was afraid they would resent her singing. She sang it beautifully, and that audience burst into spontaneous applause. Nowhere could that have happened except in a Christian church. The fellowship is unbroken!"

### Prayer as 'Direct Thinking'

In that splendid novel, *How Green Was My Valley,* the boy Huw learns of prayer on a mountainside with his wise minister, Mr. Gruffydd. The minister says: "Don't be afraid of prayer, lad; prayer is only another name for good clean direct thinking. When you pray, think well what you are saying, and make your thoughts into things that are solid." We may want to call this the threshold of prayer rather than prayer itself; but honest thinking about the meaning and ends of life is far closer to prayer than the selfish brandishing of our wants at the throne of God.—*The Christian Century.*

### Courage Out of Helplessness

Down in Maine a minister has lain helpless on his bed for fourteen years. For the past two years he has been totally blind. Rather than rail against fate, he conducted for many years a weekly radio broadcast, the purpose of which was to instill new faith and courage in the fainting hearts of his hearers, most of whom did not know they were listening to a man who had lain motionless for more than a decade. "Thank God the anchor still holds," he wrote to a friend; "I cannot move, but I can laugh and pray." Little wonder that a visitor who went to console this heroic man declared that just to stand by his side and feel the lift of his triumphant spirit was better than the greatest sermon he had ever heard.—*G. Merrill Lenox, New York, N. Y.*

### 'We Must Be Saved Together'

Dean Wicks of Princeton once said a very remarkable thing about life as it is at present organized. "Our fathers," he said, "went to a one-room schoolhouse and if fire broke out the cry was raised, 'Everyone for himself!' But now we go to school in vast complicated structures, four or five thousand children in a single building, and when fire breaks out we cannot cry, 'Everyone for himself!' If we are to be saved at all, we must be saved together, by drill and regulation. That is the true picture of our modern world. The old individualism that cried, 'Every man for himself,' will not do. If we are to be saved at all, we must be saved together."—*C. H. Witt, Simpson Memorial Methodist Church, Long Branch, N. J.*

### The Spirit and the 'Tags' of Christianity

In an article entitled "I Was in Hongkong" recently published in the *World Outlook,* R. T. Henry tells of an experience which reveals the persistency of the Christian faith in a time of the desolation of war. He says:

"I am reminded of the Easter service at the cathedral in Hongkong. On that Sunday I was richly repaid to hear the Norwegian pastor conclude the service with a summary of the sermon he had just given in his native tongue. He related how the week before he had gone to Kowloon to visit the Union Church. There he discovered that the bulletin boards bearing English inscriptions and notices had all been torn down. The name of the church in English had been chiseled out of the wall. Said he: 'The new order may erase names and destroy tags, but as I passed into the building and found a handful of Christians at prayer, I realized that the spirit of Christ was bigger and stronger and more effective than the tags we so often look for and hence miss the spirit of the Christian movement'."—*W. B. Johnson, Methodist Church, Gilroy, Calif.*

### A 'Worry Chart' Taught Him a Lesson

Some time ago a business man drew up what he called a "Worry Chart," in which he kept a record of his worries. He discovered that 40 per cent of them were about things that probably would never happen; 30 per cent concerned past decisions that he could not now unmake; 12 per cent dealt with other people's criticisms of him; 10 per cent were worries about his health. He concluded that only 8 per cent of them were really legitimate. —*Francis C. Ellis, First Congregational Church, Riverside, Calif.*

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# The Pulpit

CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON, *Editor*

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## An Extension of Main Street

BY ROBERT E. LUCCOCK

*And . . . Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. Luke 18: 37.*

LAST September President Roosevelt spoke before the International Students' Assembly. Imbedded in the heart of his speech was this paragraph: "You know why you are fighting. You know that the road that led to the Solomon islands, or the Red sea, or the coast of France, is in fact an extension of Main Street, and that when you fight anywhere along that road, you are fighting in the defense of your own home, your own free schools, your own churches, your own ideals."

There is one sentence there that is a whole sermon in itself. It is this: "The road that led to the Solomon islands, the Red sea, the coast of France is in fact an extension of Main Street." Deep down in that idea there are meanings that should touch every one of us.

Yes, the war is an extension of Main Street in all the ways that Mr. Roosevelt meant it. The war is a terrible extension of Main Street, the streets we all live on. Many of our boys have gone from these streets to the far places of conflict. And we know that there is nothing that happens in the Solomon islands or on the coast of France but what affects the everyday life of Main Street. So much we take as our starting point. But will you consider further now, what this means—"an extension of Main Street"?

I

First of all, this war is an extension of Main Street in a tragic way that Mr. Roosevelt never intended to mean. For this whole tragedy has been brought about by extending the Main Street way of living on into the area of world affairs. That is, the ruling motives, the prevailing attitudes of Main Street have been projected on to world-wide dimensions. And the way we have lived on Main Street, London, Main Street, Berlin, Main Street, Tokyo, Main Street, New York and Chicago, has pushed the world down into the shadow of war.

Let's not fool ourselves with the "bad man" theory about this war. That's too easy and too comfortable. But it's not realistic. Morally and spiritually the life of Main Street has been sick. The life that you and I have lived day after day has been sick. However much we may be forced now to stand up against the powers of evil, represented by Hitler and his colleagues, they alone were not the cause of this war.

The war grew partly out of a materialistic way of living: "the world was too much with us; soon and late, getting and spending, we laid waste our powers." At the heart of this whole crisis there lies an economic way of life that is rotten. An economic way of life based on acquisitiveness, on private gain at the expense of the welfare of multitudes of men, women and children; an economic way of life based on protecting our own special privileges, of getting what we can for ourselves—these have been some of the symptoms of a sick Main Street. How big things are, how much they cost, have counted far more with us than have the spiritual values of life. How big a car we can drive, how much money we can earn in a week—these are the standards by which millions have lived. This has been our Main Street. There is a startling phrase in Sinclair Lewis' novel *Main Street;* he speaks of "the secret trails that lead to scared pocketbooks." How many of these trails there have been up and down Main Street, leading to our own pocketbooks! Look at the Main Streets of the world and see how many secret trails there were leading to scared pocketbooks.

In Germany the big industrialists backed Hitler when he came to power. Fritz Thyssen wanted to protect his profits and crush the labor movement. This became the Main Street motive, to guard the profits even at the expense of democracy itself which couldn't stand the strain of that kind of economic system. And so the way was made easy for fascism, along the secret trails leading to scared pocketbooks.

In Japan, the big business of Main Street was behind the great rush for conquest. Joseph Newman has written a book this year which he calls *Good-by Japan.* In it one comes upon this paragraph: "The much ignored economics lay at the heart of Japan's aggression, and big business was one of the unholy trinity which inspired and paid for its new conquests." You see, the extension of Main Street, Tokyo. In England at the beginning of the war, eighty per cent of the wealth belonged to six per cent of the people. Nearly half of the national income went to ten per cent of the people. Main Street, England, had a good many secret trails to protect; some of these trails led to Abyssinia, Barcelona, Manchuria and Munich. And on Main Street, America, in the years when democracy was struggling to stay alive in Europe, we were building the highest tariff walls in history, behind which American senators shouted, "Let Europe stew in her own juice."

Now all of this is not very pleasant listening for a

Sunday morning, and we're not setting out here to outlaw big business, or smear the name of England, or take any honor away from gallant and courageous people. But this is one part of a terrible picture to which we cannot close our eyes. President Roosevelt has said it perfectly, far better than he knew: "the road to war is an extension of Main Street." Main Street is not a dead-end but a thoroughfare! And we have pushed this selfish kind of life on our own Main Street far out beyond ourselves until we ran into other Main Streets, going their own way. So now we find ourselves fighting for our lives.

II

The second idea which this sentence ought to suggest to our thought is this: If this world agony is just the extension of the Main Street way of life, then before we get very far along with the task of building a better, more decent world, there have got to be some changes on Main Street. The Main Street heart, the Main Street person have got to be fundamentally changed, changed until we can really believe in a better kind of world than any we have known. A good many Main-Streeters are not yet ready to believe in an all-out way of cooperation and community living. Vice-President Henry Wallace has put it this way: "The need henceforth is not to learn how to compete with each other for enough of this world's goods, but to learn how to live with each other in abundance."

In these days we're having to learn to live together in scarcity—using one another's automobiles so there will be enough gas for everyone, eating a little less meat so there will be enough to go around. Some day, if ever a better world is to be, we must learn as well to share and live together in the abundance of the things we might possess.

Buried on one of the back pages of *Time* magazine some time ago was one of those striking stories of a religious conversion that we scarcely expect to find in such a place. It is the story of C. E. M. Joad, British philosopher and economist, who for many years has boasted of his agnosticism. Said Joad, "I can explain anything to anybody." But in recent weeks Joad has found it increasingly difficult to explain a good many things, even to himself. He used to explain the fact of evil and suffering simply as a by-product of poor social and economic organization. Change the circumstances of life and you abolish the evils they produce. For Joad, however, this answer is no longer adequate. Evil is more deep-seated than that. At last, confronted by a world of tragedy, Joad has finally confessed that only something that can change the heart will be sufficient to transform the world. He confesses now to see the evil within ourselves.

This thing which has happened to C. E. M. Joad is simply a prominent illustration of the thing that has happened and must happen to millions of us who live on Main Street. It is necessary to do all we can to plan for a just and durable peace, but something very fundamental must happen inside of us if that peace is not to be just a reshuffling of the cards of individualism and nationalism. If the fighting around the world has come from the extension of the life we have lived within ourselves at home, then something has got to happen to the Main Street people so we don't leave it a street that twenty-five years from now will run out again to new and more terrible wars—a highway of disaster.

Main Street can be changed; its heart can be changed by the pull of a great personality. It will be changed when it is captured and lifted up by a great ideal. A long time ago the world knew a Great Teacher who lived all his life on Main Street. He walked along it from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Often on the pages of the Gospels we read, "And Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Now Jesus knew what it was to live in a totalitarian world. Daily he saw what imperialism and persecution meant to people who lived under tyranny. He knew how much the world of his day needed to be changed. Jesus however belonged also to Main Street, because he lived there. He worked in a carpenter shop; he ate in the homes of every town on the thoroughfare. Jesus understood the life of Main Street, and he knew the transformation that needed to come to the heart of Main Street. For Jesus belonged also to God, and he brought God to Main Street. He passed by and saw the needs of all those people he touched. He brought transformation to Main Street by setting the hearts of its people on fire with a great goal. One of the finest stories of this is the story of Zacchaeus: Jesus called him down out of the tree and gave his heart a great new purpose to live for. The man's life was made over. So, on all the Main Streets along which Jesus traveled, his personality caught hold of men and turned them away from just following Main Street.

Dr. Bowie has a sentence to describe Jesus: "He took the common experiences of the ordinary life and set them marching to far-off cadences." The personality and spirit of Jesus Christ can even today walk down our Main Street. He can take the common experiences of our ordinary lives and set them marching to the far-off cadences of God. There is a love for humanity beyond ourselves in the spirit of Jesus. That love is contagious, so contagious that it will make all things new on our portion of Main Street, if we will walk along it with Christ.

III

Finally, as we think about the street upon which we live our lives, we ought to be thinking about the church which stands on that street. A church which can be merely an echo of Main Street, or a church which can be a church of God. In these days we ought to be sure of what that church is saying and believing. It may be that what we say and believe here in church is just the reflection of the prevailing life of Main Street. It may be that we have no higher source of life than the sidewalks of Main Street.

Quite popular on the radio in the days before the war were programs known as "man-in-the-street" broadcasts. Programs put on the air from street corners and curbstones in which passers-by were haled before a microphone and asked their opinions on everything from the latest style in women's hats to their reactions to the leading best-sellers. We all enjoyed these broad-

casts more or less because the people who talked reflected just about the same things we ourselves were thinking; they gave a picture of the life and mind of Main Street.

Well, I have been in churches too where I seemed to be listening to a "man-in-the-street" broadcast; churches where people seemed to be giving an echo of the noise and life of the streets outside; churches where no strong fresh winds seemed to blow in from somewhere out beyond ourselves. A church like that is just the extension of Main Street.

I have recently read two chapters in two great books published during the past decade. One of them is the last chapter in James Truslow Adams' book, *The Epic of America,* in which he lifts up before our imagination what he calls the American Dream. These are words out of that chapter:

> But there has been also the American Dream, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement. . . . It is not a dream of motorcars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and woman shall be able to attain the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the circumstances of birth or position.

He calls that the American Dream. It is a wonderful dream, isn't it?

Then I turned to a chapter in another book, a book called *Middletown In Transition* by Robert and Helen Lynd. This is a book which gives us a living picture of a typical American city studied and surveyed in all its aspects—people, schools, business, homes. It was a typical city in the midwest of the United States. In that book is a chapter on the church. It leaves you with a sadness of heart to see what the church has actually become on Main Street of a real American city. Here are some words out of that chapter:

> Middletown's pulpit has largely surrendered its traditional role of leader. [It] has bartered [its] peculiar right to proclaim sharply dissident truths for the right to be well supported by the reigning economy.

What is true of Middletown's pulpit is true likewise of the church in general.

I set those two chapters side by side and looked at them: The American Dream, and the American church as it actually is. The church has largely forgotten the dream—to become just the extension of the community, merely endorsing the secular values of Main Street. Herbert Agar has called this "A Time For Greatness." For the church it is indeed a time to show itself to be more than an extension of Main Street. The church of Christ in these days cannot any longer afford to speak *from* Main Street, but must speak *to* Main Street. We must speak not from *ourselves,* but from *God.* For only when this happens will Main Street ever feel that lift and that pull that will turn our blind alleys into highways. To do this, the church must recapture its dreams —the American dream, and then dreams beyond that. For there are other dreams that must kindle the church—dreams that spring from the very heart of the universe, which is the heart of God!

> That men shall love one another,
> That white shall call black man brother,
> That greed shall pass from the market place,
> That lust shall yield to love for the race,
> That men shall meet with God face to face.

Jesus of Nazareth is passing by—in Him are God's Dreams.

# High Conquest

**By C. Stanley Lowell**

JESUS CHRIST demanded the impossible. We ask only what is reasonable. Therein lies the difference between primitive and modern Christianity. And therein, I suspect, lies a fatal flaw which has seriously debilitated our own faith.

On the one hand is Jesus saying: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath cannot be a disciple of mine." On the other hand we have all the ingenious ways Christians have found to get around his demand. They have evaded it by ritual. Practice such and such religious observances, they have said, and you will be saved. There has been the ruse of creedalism. Accept this affirmation of faith and you will be saved. But far more commonly, men have tried to obscure Christ's demands by a moderate, half-way morality. "I try to be a decent citizen," they may say, "and treat the other fellow right. That's my idea of Christianity." How many there are who coast along thinking that is about all Christ expects. But what he really said was this: "What do ye more than others? Do not even the gentiles the same?" Jesus challenged the highest and the best in every man. The Christian church has lost incalculably because it has failed to do the same.

### *WHY FOLLOW CHRIST?*

The other day I was reading again Jesus' call to discipleship as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel. He says very plainly that following him will be a difficult and dangerous feat. One must put loyalty to him above loyalty to home or firm or country. One cannot be a disciple without taking on the very heaviest burdens—"bearing the cross," Jesus called it. He refuses to minimize the hardships; he emphasizes them. He says very frankly that there will be those who cannot take them. A man should not even start out without carefully counting the cost. And what is the cost? Verily, everything that one has.

When I finished reading the passage, I fell to wondering why anyone should have wanted to become a

disciple. There did not seem to be any very good reason. It would have been so much simpler not to be one. It brought to mind a passage from one of the best books I have read this year—*High Conquest,* by James Ullman. It is a book which tells the story of climbs on some of the highest mountains in the world. The author raises the question as to why men climb mountains. "Why," he asks, "should men deliberately turn their back on the hard-won security of their usual lives to face storm and cold, hardship, danger and often death itself? It is not material gain that lures them, for no fortune was ever made on the mountain tops. Nor is it fame, for the great peaks are still closed—to the press agent. It is not power or prestige or the hand of fair lady. Why climb? A man climbs because he needs to climb, because that is the way he is made. . . . The key to the mountaineering spirit lies not in what men do but in what they are—in the raising of their eyes and the lifting of their hearts. . . . Man is never more a man than when he is striving for what is beyond his grasp."

It is in something of the same spirit that men follow Christ. They do so because they must. There is a compulsion about the high and difficult that is stronger than the love of ease or personal comfort. Man has a divine discontent. When he has glimpsed the beautiful, the drab will no longer content him. When he has seen a vision of truth, however precarious the road that leads to it, he must needs begin the quest. "Man is never more a man," says Mr. Ullman, "than when he is striving for what is beyond his grasp." At the cost of comfort and security and even life itself, he must go higher.

### *MANY CALLED; FEW CHOSEN*

To be sure, there are people who never feel that way. We read that great multitudes went with Jesus the day he preached on the cost of discipleship. But there was no crowding afterward! To many, no doubt, the whole thing seemed a silly business. The healings were all right. The handouts of food were fine. But all this talk of cross-bearing was nonsense. Why bother? So the apathetic, like the poor, are always with us.

But some in that crowd were mightily stirred. What Jesus had said got them. When he closed with the assertion that they must be ready to forsake all they had, that only capped the climax. They rose up to follow.

Ultimately men like what is high and difficult. Perhaps I am not explaining it, but I do say that it is true. The explanation of failure in one phase of our life after another is just that we have forgotten what Jesus remembered—this capacity of man to be heroic. We take it for granted that people want the cheapest, the easiest, the simplest. We insist on dealing with them as though they were morons and cripples. We have sent them on into life with a morality functioning at the level of the least common denominator. You may see the results everywhere.

What is the matter with our family life? Too many people are getting married with the idea that they will live happily ever after. No one has ever told them, and they do not know, that a successful marriage is one of the most difficult achievements in the world, requiring the infinite patience, wisdom and artistry of two devoted persons. What is the matter with the churches? Too little requirement; too little challenge. The people come to the services if it is not too hot or too cold, and go home in a glow of virtue as though they had proved themselves real Christians. Most of that, alas! is the fault of us ministers. We seldom preach on the text: "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." We quote such words as these too little: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, cannot be my disciple."

### *THE CHURCH THEN AND NOW*

Jesus knew what he was doing when he put religious practice on this basis. So long as the church hewed to that line, it flourished. In its early days, Christianity was competing for the people's allegiance with older, more strongly established faiths. The mystery cults such as Mithras and Isis were very powerful. They promised their devotees the world with a ring around it. Little in the way of moral rectitude was required. In fact the ritual of such faiths was itself often obscene.

Over against this easy proposition was Christianity with its strict moral discipline for each believer and the highest standards of personal and social righteousness. Would you not suppose the easy religion would win out? Well, it did not. Christianity forged steadily ahead; the mystery religions lagged. The reason is that men are constitutionally averse to an easy religion. They reserve their real devotion for a faith that challenges the whole man.

I have discovered this principle to be true as well in the practical work of the local church. One of the tests of a minister is his ability to get able people to share in the leadership of the church's work. When I started out in the ministry, my strategy was the easy approach. "It's not a very hard job," I would say: "it won't take much of your time." (Perhaps my idea was to get them in and then pour it on later!) But this strategy seldom worked. I have found the hard approach more successful. Now I simply state the responsibilities as they are, emphasizing the time and effort involved. And I have discovered that such is this curious human nature of ours that men would rather tackle a difficult job for their church than an easy one.

The cross is the favorite symbol of our faith. And why? Because at heart we do not want the easy way. We want a faith that challenges to the uttermost.

### *WHAT DO THE PEOPLE WANT?*

It has been said that preachers give their congregations what they want. That is very well, if we give them what they *really* want. To do that would be to challenge them with Christianity as a dynamic, demanding way of life which counts that day lost which

sees no Christian task undertaken and done. We would tell them that Christianity is a way of love that will never fail; a way of devotion lying high above the petty jealousies and selfish ambitions of ordinary men. And if we were thus to challenge them, we should not lose by it.

Here is a mode of thought to match our present effort as a nation. A recent contest among high school children for the best slogan of the war had this as the winner: "We are fighting to make the world safe for silk stockings." It is no good. It is too small. But suppose Vice-President Wallace is right—that this is the century of the common man and that the war is somehow about him. Suppose that we ourselves thought of the war not as a struggle to hold the old lines, but to establish new lines of justice and fair play. Suppose at the outset we were to cast overboard the old imperialism, race snobberies, class prides and envisage a new era where basic liberties would be extended to all men. That would put spirit into us, for it is the glory of man that if the goal be high enough, he does not count the cost.

### *EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY*

At any rate, those of us who profess to be Christians must now become big Christians or give up the effort to be Christian at all. What this agonized world situation demands is high conquest. Will a *little* love be enough to cope with this surging tide of hate? Will *conventional* goodness be adequate for the heavy strain we shall have to bear? Will *fair-weather* religion hold when the floods of evil beat in upon us? The answers are clear. What is called for is not spiritual adequacy but spiritual heroism. It must be all out or nothing. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath cannot be my disciple."

Some years ago George Leigh-Mallory, the great English climber, left his frozen body a few hundred feet beneath the summit of Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. The story is told that a reception was given for members of this expedition shortly before they left for India. A frivolous young woman said to Mallory: "Why must you risk your life trying to climb that awful mountain?" Quick as a flash Mallory retorted: "Because it is there!"

Some of us feel that way about Christ. I suppose life would have been a good deal simpler if he had never lived. Perhaps we could get by much more easily and these fierce demands would let us alone. Personally I think we might prefer to give up the effort to follow him, for it was never so difficult as it is going to be now. But how can we give up on Christ when he is still there?

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I AM for the church because it insists upon the importance of human personality, and asserts the divine capacity of every individual no matter how degraded.

CHARLES P. TAFT.

THE meaning of the cross must be lived out in many prosaic situations, or it becomes meaningless.

GEORGIA HARKNESS.

# The Perils to Worthy Purposes

BY LOWELL R. DITZEN

THE BEGINNING of a new year marks a time when our resolutions run high, when our intentions are exceptionally good, when we easily subscribe to worthy purposes. This perennial attitude is heightened as we enter the year 1943. For beyond the usual intentions to make new gains physically, mentally and spiritually, there come to all of us the increasingly urgent calls of our nation. There are appeals for the services of men and women in exacting and practical tasks. There are needs for the conservation of what we have, for the saving of what we earn, for the development of such skills as we possess. And who among us will not say, as did the young man of whom Jesus spoke, in response to his father's call, "I go, sir"? Indeed we are moved to worthy purposes in days like these!

Such resolutions should not be lightly regarded. One does not let some worthy purpose grip his imagination without finding a direction, an elevation for his life. Surely Jesus spent his major energies in having men see and accept more worthy purposes. He looked with affection on the rich young ruler, not because of his pious home life or his economic status, but because his intentions were high. That man was seeking a more worthy purpose, and responsive chords were struck in the Master. Indeed, the relationships of Jesus with men were always marked by an attempt to have them shift their resources from a lower to a higher level. His repeated counsel was: "Accept first the cause of the Kingdom, give that your primary allegiance, and all other things which appear important will fall into right perspective." Yet the parable of the son, whose purpose was so positive but whose accomplishment was so negligible, shows Jesus' knowledge of the perils to good resolve. How pregnant the insights revealed in the sentence: "He said, I go, sir: and went not"!

There is about that comment an aura of timelessness. As then, so now, we are moved to join a cause; we accept a responsibility; under the spell of an appeal we say: "Here am I, send me"—"I'll be there"—"You can count on me." But have there not been times when the stark condemnation, "but he went not," may have been said of us?

Plutarch tells how Socrates called the youthful Alcibiades to virtue, with words that "so overcame Alcibiades as to draw tears from his eyes and disturb his very soul. Yet sometimes, " the historian adds, "he would abandon himself to flatterers, when they proposed to him varieties of pleasure, and would desert Socrates, who would then pursue him as if he had been

a fugitive slave." If tears have come to our eyes in the presence of some bitter need, if our souls have been moved to high resolutions, and then if we have seen those resolutions peter out, it is not amiss for us to consider the perils that hinder worthy purposes.

I

*It is well to see that peril lies in believing a major conquest is made when a purpose is accepted.*

During the period between the two world wars resolution after resolution was passed, monographs and articles were published, societies were formed, all favoring the most worthy purpose of world peace. In responding to the appeals that were then so common there were some of us who, by the very force of our enthusiasm, seemed (if our actions would offer proof) to feel that the major conquest was made. We damned the inhumanity, the folly, the waste of war. We saw the incomparable benefits of a world free from armed violence, and—well, that's about as far as we went. "There must be peace, for have we not gained it by our charts and graphs, our conventions and our glowing intentions?"

Almost as naively, there were those who seemed to feel in the surge of national effort following Pearl Harbor that the war would soon be ended. "Now our mighty nation is mobilized and united in the purpose of war, and surely our misguided enemies will tremble and cower, retreat and give in." So we spoke. As a people we accepted the purpose of making battle. But Lidice, Stalingrad, Corregidor, Tobruk and Guadalcanal are bloody reminders of the vast distance between the acceptance of a purpose and its accomplishment.

The aftermath of the evangelistic emphasis of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought home this truth for us in the religious world. We saw that it is not enough to say, "O Lord, I come," important though that initial response may be. The attainment of a realistic faith and the building of a Christian personality do not come about by the magic of a moment. It is rather the continued conquest of a lifetime. "Not all who say Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom"!

When one accepts a worthy purpose it is only the prelude and not the grand finale. At the high tide of enthusiasm one may cry with William Blake:

> Bring me my bow of burning gold!
> Bring me my arrows of desire!
> Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
> Bring me my chariot of fire.

But with the arrows of desire at hand and seated in one's chariot of fiery purpose, little will be the consequence if the arrows remain in the quiver and the horses stay tied to the hitching post.

Even though the young man's resolution was worthy when he said, "I go, sir," yet that resolution alone did not till the soil, pick the fruit, thresh the grain, or fill the winepress.

Let us, therefore, not stand in exaltation before some worthy purpose without recognizing that here is only the beginning. That the peril of confusing acceptance and accomplishment be avoided, may our prayer be then:

> O Lord,
> Give me to build above the deep intent—
> The deed, the deed.

II

*There is a peril in failing to accept the fact that worthy purpose levies a high cost for accomplishment.*

The book of Joshua records that period when the children of Israel, after the Egyptian slavery and the homeless wandering in the deserts, finally crossed the Jordan to live in God's land of milk and honey. They took the city of Jericho without great cost. At the blowing of the trumpets, the walls fell. Their next attempt at conquest resulted in the routing of their three thousand warriors by the Amorites. As the battered and broken legions returned, Joshua, in the Oriental gesture of anguish, tore his garments and groveled on his face, crying, "Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side of Jordan!"

"Would to God we had been content and stayed where we were!" These are the words of one whose purpose was high, who moved out on its accomplishment, but who had not foreseen the cost of its achievement. There are those whose heart turns to water, whose enthusiasm quickly dissolves when the opponents gather, when the tax is levied. These have not assured themselves of life's universal law, that in the intellectual and moral, as indeed in the physical spheres, each high purpose demands a correspondingly high price for its attainment.

The achievement of stable character has its price of discipline and self-control and the continued engagement of noble pursuits. The maintenance of freedom among a people, we are learning, is bought only at the price of relentless vigilance and nurture and sacrifice and struggle. We do not begin the building of a house without accepting the fact of its cost. Let us not presume to accept a new purpose for our life, mentally or spiritually, without a recognition of the toll it would impose for accomplishment.

Oliver Wendell Holmes chants lyrically in his "Chambered Nautilus" of

> The ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
> Sails the unshadowed main—
> The venturous bark that flings
> On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
> In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings.

But what made this flawless beauty and perfection of the nautilus? His latter stanzas tell us:

> Year after year beheld the silent toil
> That spread his lustrous coil.

The beauty was the result of long years of silent, persistent, unromantic labor. It was that price, and that alone, which created the delicate symmetry of the ship of pearl.

The young son of the willing intent may have found that to express an affirmative purpose was a cheap and easy thing, as compared to the hard and exacting price of fulfilling it.

Our day demands men who not alone have high resolutions, but men who understand and accept the cost that those resolutions entail. He who puts his hand to the plow, but when the muscles begin to ache and when the monotonous drudgery begins to pall, then turns back—that man is not fit for the kingdom of any purpose.

III

*There is a peril in divorcing worthy purposes from personal responsibility for their fulfillment.*

If the young man will not go to the vineyard, the thorns will choke, the little foxes will tear, the grapes will rot. And whatever the outwardly legitimate reasons he may give for his negligence, the fact stands that he accepted a purpose, but inwardly he failed to assume the responsibility which the acceptance of that purpose placed on him. Having said, "I go, sir," there was laid on him the expectation of others. He was personally responsible, and when "he went not" he failed his fellows, the cause itself and his own best self.

Worthy causes do not stand without responsible men who will take a personal share in maintaining them. No purpose to have a home will be long maintained without individuals who will be responsible for keeping it in order, rearing the children, meeting its obligations and furthering a spirit of confidence and affection. No high purpose to maintain Christ's church will be made real without responsible men and women who "study its peace, unity and purity," who engage in prayer for its continuing ministry, who undergird it with the first-fruits of their time and ability and possessions.

It is difficult for many of us to sense this peril in the institutions and causes of civilization which encompass large masses of men. We are easily misled by the reasoning process that says, "There are so many people contributing to the war effort; there are so many devoted churchmen, that my contribution will not be missed." There is an old story which clearly shows the tragedy of such rationalizing. In a prosperous rural parish it was customary to have a picnic each fall to commemorate the harvest season and deepen the friendships of the people in the church. The committee in charge asked all the parishioners, among other things, to bring a quart of their best wine, which would be placed in a keg for the common use of all. On the festive day each family, as it arrived, went aside to the keg, and took from its goods the quart of "wine" and emptied it in. When all were gathered, the priest was invited to draw the first glass to begin the festivity. He turned the spigot and *out came water!*

Can't you hear those people whispering in busied preparation for the occasion: "But we have such poor wine," or "Our good wine is almost gone—if all the others bring their best wine our quart of water won't be noticed."

No purpose, either of individual or social character, is furthered without individuals who say, "This means me!" "The responsibility for doing this work is mine." And whether it be the cultivation of Christian character, the provision of food for the starving people of conquered Europe, the maintenance of economic equilibrium in our national life, or the saving of scrap metal, the need is not alone for purpose, but for people whose purpose crystallizes into a sense of responsibility and then into wholehearted action. Purpose is a seed. To bring it to fruition requires toil, stern and unremitting.

Percy Mackaye sensed this when he wrote:

> Lord our God!—
> Thou criest through our prayer
> . . . .
> We, who pray, ourselves are fate.

The purposes of God lay their responsibilities on men. They cannot be divorced from the tangible efforts toward their realization without the purposes themselves being imperiled.

True indeed is the adage which proclaims, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." For it acknowledges the reality of the perils to worthy purposes. As we accept the challenges of this new year, may we understand that our resolution is only the beginning. Let us know and accept the cost that those purposes would exert. Let us feel and respond to the individual responsibilities those purposes would lay on us.

On the body of an Australian soldier, killed in the last war, these lines were found:

> I saw the powers of darkness take their flight;
> I saw the morning break.

The call of the church and of the nation, the call to revamp one's personal character, does demand men whose purpose envisions the "flight of dark powers," who "see the morning break." But more than this, it is for men who, in the long nights of continuing battle, maintain the unswerving will to make that vision a reality.

To those who so purpose, and who so do, no greater tribute can be given than this: "He said, 'I go, sir.' *And he went!*"

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## Justice the Path to Peace

MANKIND can be redeemed only by justice, and the establishment of social justice within every nation is a forerunner to world peace. Hating war will not abolish wars. Signing pledges not to fight will not abolish wars. Matching armies with stronger armies may arrest aggression, but will not abolish war. We in America by improving our economy, by remedying the glaring injustices which prevail, by utilizing our vast wealth so as to eliminate poverty and slums and homeless migratory workers and starving sharecroppers, can establish within our country a standard of social justice which will be imitated in the rest of the world and which will lay the groundwork for a basic and enduring peace. The future does not belong to exploitation. It belongs to justice. The future does not belong to war. It belongs to peace. The time will come when the lion shall lie down with the lamb and "the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

FERDINAND M. ISSERMAN.

# Our 'Amens'

By Donald W. Schlicher

*Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen. Jeremiah 28:6.*

WERE we to assemble the stalwart prophets who through the ages have declared unto men the will of God, Jeremiah would march in the front ranks. Jeremiah had a great message to proclaim, and with his unusual sense of the dramatic he proclaimed it.

Acceptance or rejection were of little consequence. It mattered only that he spoke God's word. In all literature there is scarcely another figure so strange as is Jeremiah. No man announced more loudly or at greater length the will of God. No man, excepting Job, suffered more tragic consequences for his faith. We think of Jeremiah as a great mouthpiece of God in a generation of decay. He was the tower of strength in the midst of a great battlefield of the soul, and he stands out as a mighty rock even amid the tumultuous conflicts of our own time.

We seldom need to probe far into the lives of great men before we find weaknesses. The disclosure of failings need not belittle heroes in our eyes. Rather, it is a proof of the common humanity of all men, kings and knaves, prophets and poets.

Jeremiah had at least one moment of weakness. A false prophet, Hananiah, had appeared. Judah was in a desperate plight; her complete fall was imminent. Hananiah offered false hopes, assured the people that within two years the temple would be fully equipped for worship. All eyes must have turned to Jeremiah, the so-called "prophet of doom," when he rose to answer Hananiah. One might have expected denunciation of such false optimism, but we are amazed by the words which follow. We are confronted with one of the most compelling sentences in the book: "Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen."

If any man should have been able to see through the sham of Hananiah, that man was Jeremiah. If any man might have been expected to shout a vigorous No to the false prophet, that man was Jeremiah. Of all men, Jeremiah, now that his whole message was being undermined, should have proclaimed the severest denunciation of Hananiah. That is why the sentence is so amazing: "Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen." This was Jeremiah's moment of weakness, a moment in which he gave assent to the words which poured from the glib tongue of a charlatan.

From the point of view of his weakness, we are the descendants of Jeremiah. Insofar as we are devout in our religious exercises we feel that we know the will of God for our sad old world. But, like Jeremiah, we often shout Amen, when we should exclaim, No. The charlatans of the world dazzle with their mellifluous tongues as we, who should know better, add our Amens.

I

It may seem of little importance to us what the ultimate meaning of the world may be, but we are saying Amens to attitudes toward the world which are essentially unchristian.

For example, there is the traditional view of the world expressed by the Preacher when he said, "There is no new thing under the sun." By this men mean that when the world was created all that was, is and shall be, was incorporated into its makeup. God, as it were, was at work in his laboratory. In a giant test tube he tried a new experiment. He would make a perfect world. So, into the tube he poured joy, love, understanding, idyllic idleness. Early in the experiment something went wrong. The tube was dirty, or an element was impure. A vileness was found; sin was present. The Celestial Chemist introduced new elements to counteract the impurity. Retribution and grace were put in, as well as some of his own blood. Thereafter the experiment was, and remains, carefully controlled. Using the familiar figure of the laboratory, that is the meaning of the world to many people.

This view means that the destiny of the world is predetermined. Joy, love, hate, sorrow—all that makes life worth living and leaving—is in the world from the beginning. History can have no real meaning. At best, it is a succession of predetermined events which will end in some cataclysmic upheaval. Man can do nothing to alter the course of events; he can only assume his little tasks in a world beyond his comprehension. If for no other reason, this view of the world is false because with it comes the conviction of man's sheer inability to cope with historic forces. If that is so, we can't blame Hitler, or Mussolini. They are playing their part in a scene created for them by God. We don't really believe this, but, although we may not always think it out in just this fashion, how many Christian churchmen say Amen to this idea of the world's meaning! How many of us give ourselves over to become limp dolls dancing about according to the fancies of some heavenly puppet-master!

There is another view of the world, just as false, and perhaps even more dangerous. It is held most frequently by those who have had a smattering of science. Many would call it the scientific world view, although any reputable scientist would disdain such a title applied to it. Our world, they say, is one in which nothing happens by chance. Woven into the fabric of the universe are inviolable laws, physical and moral. There is a reason for mental anguish, for soul-tearing grief, for spiritual defeat, just as there is a reason for earthquakes and cyclones. Bravely we recite: every effect has a knowable cause. We learned our physics well, and to those who are not convinced we explain that for every action there must be a corresponding reaction. In other words, this is a mechanistic universe. Man is a part of it and differs from it only to this extent, that he can possibly know the rest. If he

studies intently and observes diligently enough, man can know the whole universe. Even now he knows enough not to be caught by any fanciful notions such as divine revelation or life after death. He knows that

> It's all nothing.
> It's all a world where bugs and emperors
> Go singularly back to the same dust.

On every hand there are countless good souls who should know that the universe is neither static nor purely mechanistic. It is a world of endless becoming. It is impossible to tell to what heights or what depths men may attain. The universe is the theater of God's activity. Here his plans are being wrought; here personality and character are being developed. History has meaning. Yet, these folks like Jeremiah of old cry Amen to false views of our universe.

II

We do not always think in terms of the world. More often we are concerned with our immediate goals. As the world sets its standards we give assent with our immediate goals. As the world sets its standards we give assent with our Amens. The world says that the base is the most extensive and therefore the permanent. We who know that the excellent is the permanent nonetheless cry Amen. The world says that material things abide. Although we know that only the spiritual is lasting, still we add our Amen. The world about us insists that things are valuable only as they are useful. We know that the philosophy of utility frequently ends in futility, but we add our Amen, as if that were not true.

One of the most dangerous views of life is that according to which everything is devoted to the strength of the state. With religious fanaticism everything, men and capital, is used to glorify the nation. The high Christian motive of sacrificial service is perverted to the accomplishment of ends which stifle the growth of Christian personality. Neither pity nor piety dare interfere with the ruthless aggrandizement of the nation which looms up all-powerful, majestic, an object of adoration and praise.

Over all the world force has displaced faith, as if Jesus never lived. If anyone could be expected to denounce this false trust in might, the Christians could be. But, with the pagans of the world we cry, Amen.

In our nation we are to spend many billions of dollars to fight the aggression of the totalitarian states. One suspects that here we have the modern counterpart of the specious optimism of Hananiah who assured the Hebrews that all would be well. In effect, we are being told that we need only make ourselves formidable enough with the strength of our armaments, then the Lord will look with favor upon us, then fortune will be with us, then we shall be safe from defeat. I call this a specious sort of optimism because it misses completely the major issue. Though we may have been forced to take arms, let us not forget that the weaknesses in democracy cannot be hid behind strong armies and navies. Even in wartime the best defense for democracy is a democracy which works. In our zeal to defend democracy we adopt the methods of totalitarianism. We insure freedom of choice for all men by adopting conscription. We guarantee freedom of the press by unleashing floods of propaganda. We assure freedom of assembly by labeling every group that disagrees with us subversive or "fifth column." Overnight we have discovered that we are patriotic, and we display our patriotism in wearing costume jewelry and in shouting to the heavens some sentimental songs which have almost become national hymns. Yes, we are free, but we are going to curb that freedom to preserve it. One wonders if it will be placed in one of the remote vaults of the National Archives Building. Airplanes and tanks and unquestioned obedience are not enough.

The sad part of the whole procedure is not that we do things without thinking them through. We do that constantly. The unfortunate feature is that there is scarcely anyone to stand up and say, No. We who should know that the Christian way is by power of love and not by force, who should know that sometimes nations must be suffering servants rather than armed watchdogs—we who know this should speak out our minds. But, do we? Where are our Jeremiahs? They are in the camps of the false prophets saying their Amens. Jeremiah was not a member of the majority party. He was always advocating unpopular reforms. He was unpatriotic, and he became weak in the moment when he espoused blatant patriotism. One wishes our nation today had some "unpatriotic" people of Jeremiah's type.

III

A generation disillusioned by the failure of the optimistic outlook after the First World War has placed God far off in the heavens. The science of the nineteenth century bowed God out of the universe with thanks for his past favors; the religions of the twentieth push him away. They find the ways of stupid men impossible to reconcile with their idea of an all-powerful and all-wise God. So, they tell us, God has absconded. He has quit this sinful world and remains hid from the knowledge of men. God, we are told, is the Wholly Other. He differs from man in every respect. In him resides every goodness; in man is only baseness wretchedness, sin. Of himself man cannot approach to the majesty of God. Only God's grace permits him to do this.

This idea of God, it seems to me, is false, if the teachings of Jesus mean anything. Yet, it is amazing how even the Jeremiahs on every hand are adding their Amens to the chorus singing from Europe to America. This is the theology of a thwarted people; it is the religion of battered men from whom hope has flown, for whom the Kingdom of God has ceased to have much meaning. If the life of Jesus meant anything at all, it was an answer to the question: Where is God? He was God become man. In him the divinity in man was manifest. Throughout his life the presence of God is emphasized. He saw the Father in many things; he communed with God at any time or in any place. The prodigal son does not wait for his father to come

hunting him. "I will arise and go unto my father," he said.

Man has value in God's sight. He is not the basest but the noblest of God's creatures. Not only is he worth saving, but with God's help he works out his own salvation, albeit "with fear and trembling." God has not absconded. To say that is to make him a whimpering, fretful God who becomes peeved at the foibles of his creatures. In the crushing burdens of our day, when it seems that once again right is on the scaffold and wrong on the throne, the question, Where is God? is not an easy one. Of one thing, I believe, we may be certain: that he has not left this sad old world of ours. As in the person of the Christ he once trod the dusty lanes of Palestine, so today he treads the war-torn fields of the world. As he once in the person of his Son suffered for the sins of men, so today God suffers with us in our folly and stupidity. That much, at least, should be clear to all Christians. Yet, when men tell us that God is nowhere to be found, that he remains unapproachable and hid from us, we add our Amens, just as did Jeremiah to the words of the false prophet.

False prophets are both hopeful and popular. They offer the easy solution. To regard the world as a carefully controlled scientific experiment or as a well-oiled machine is much easier than it is to regard it as an organism. To defend the idea of democracy with a sword is easier than to make democracy work. Although one is faced with the problem of explaining the good, it is, generally speaking, easier to think of God apart from the world than to think of him as identified with the world in some way. So often the world picks the easy way, the way of least resistance. By adding our Amens we give assent to the easy way, and easy ways are seldom of much value.

The world makes light of serious matters, and we say, Yes. We are told that life should be a round of pleasure and frivolity, and we say, Aye. We are told that life is to be used up, and we say, So be it. To the incomplete and immature goals of the world we add our Amen. When the world plays Wagner on a penny whistle, we get out our tin pipes and join in the Götterdämmerung. In much of its pettiness we stand with the world.

We must notice, however, that Jeremiah's weakness was merely a lapse. It did not last long. Quickly he recovered and spoke out against Hananiah. We must do likewise. If we have lapsed, as we all have at one time or another, let us recover our senses as quickly as we may, let us speak out against the false prophets of our day, and let us reserve our Amens for the things of God.

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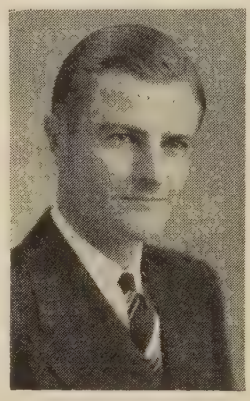
AT LONG LAST there is an awakening from spiritual apathy. Ten men today are seeking spiritual guidance where one was interested five years ago. At long last men acknowledge that there is some logic in the words of the psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh in vain."

WILLIAM MATHER LEWIS.

# 'There Shall Be A Highway'

BY JACK FINEGAN

THERE is much to make it seem that the world today is heading down a blind alley. Most of the world is at war, and war certainly is a terrible dead end street. There has been persistent unemployment and depression. There are great extremes of wealth and poverty. There is bitterness of class, race and religion. These symptoms seem to many people to indicate the decline of Western civilization. As a matter of fact they remind us vividly of some characteristics of the ancient world in its period of decline. In the ancient Graeco-Roman world the unintermittent wars of four hundred years were followed by exhaustion and debt. The middle class was wiped out. There was increasing acrimony between the extremes of society. Large sections of people had nothing to lose and hence were ready for any revolution. If history in our time is to degenerate into world wars followed by world depressions every twenty-five years, we have reason to be pessimistic. In that case our temporary enjoyment of the privilege, power and wealth of America may be like nothing so much as participation at "the captain's dinner on a sinking ship with mutiny in the hold."



### *YOUTH'S DEAD END STREETS*

There is even more to make it seem that no pathway open to youth today really leads anywhere. It has been remarked that there are more suicides in New York city than anywhere else because every street ends at the water's edge. It looks very much to youth today as if every possible pathway ended at the water's edge. There are the roads of peace and war. The dilemma of the student mind as it looks at these alternative ways has been expressed accurately in a student editorial in a west coast university newspaper. The editor wrote: "We have been schooled to distrust force, appeals to emotion, and the catchwords of easy patriotism. We have been impregnated with the knowledge that war is the enemy of democracy. With stunning suddenness, the signals have been switched. Within a year, gunpowder and shells are urged upon us as the panacea for the ills of mankind. . . . The result has been confusion. . . ." We have put our feet upon the pathway of education for some of the best years of our life, but recently another famous student editorial has declared that American universities are not "turning out men and women who are tough as nails, physically and mentally alert, equipped for living."

Most of us also have been enthusiastic about the highroad of science. Yet within less than forty years

after that astounded Kitty Hawk lifeguard ran three miles to the village to cry, "They've done it!" the airplane has been turned into a fiendish instrument of destruction which in a single city in seven and one-half minutes killed 30,000 persons and wounded 70,000 more. Are we to be expected to go on inventing finer instruments which will be used for more wholesale destruction? Is there no unambiguously clear road before us?

In one of George Moore's novels Irish peasants are described who, just to keep them busy and to give an excuse for feeding them, have been set to work building roads which run out and end in dreary bogs. George Moore writes: "The road which leads nowhere is difficult to make, even though starving men are employed upon it; for a man to work well there must be an end in view." Even so, for a man to live well there must be an end in view.

### *LIFE'S LITTLE STAGE*

There is also the fact that from the earliest day to the present many philosophers have insisted that human life, no matter whether its circumstances be favorable or unfavorable, is doomed to disillusionment. Every man, they have taught, goes down a road where if he is smart he may snatch a few transitory pleasures, but where at the end is weariness, boredom and death. Babylonian cuneiform preserves the cynical advice which some philosophers gave the youth of at least four thousand years ago:

> When the gods created mankind,
> Death they prepared for man, . . .
> Day and night dance and make music . . .
> For this is the mission of man.

In the Hebrew of some hundreds of years B. C. there is similar advice: "There is nothing good for man under the sun except to eat, drink and be merry." From that day to this, epicurean philosophers have told us that that is all there is to life. Small wonder when so many have taken this advice that about one-third of the cases which come to Jung, the great psychologist, are suffering as he writes, "from no clinically definable neurosis, but from the senselessness and emptiness of their lives."

In such a day when every road seems to run down and end at the water's edge, there is a word out of that amazing book, the Bible, which speaks straight to us. It is this: "There shall be a highway." In the Bible this text is related to at least three situations.

### *THE HIGHWAY OUT FROM EGYPT*

First, there is reference to what had happened when the Hebrews were in Egypt. "And there shall be a highway," it is written, "like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." It is probable that the Israelites were in Egypt in the time of Thutmose III. This Pharaoh has been described by Breasted as the "world's first empire builder." He was a dictator who ruled his nation with centralized efficiency. His armies were dominant from the upper cataracts of the Nile to Asia Minor and Mesopotamia—areas increasingly familiar in the geographical knowledge of the average man today. The Exodus then probably took place in the days of Amenhotep II. When the mummy of this great warrior was found in the Valley of Kings, his famous bow, which none but he could draw, was still by his side. It bore the inscription, "Smiter of the Cave-dwellers, overthrower of Kush, hacking up their cities—the Great Wall of Egypt, Protector of his soldiers."

What chance had the Israelites? They had nothing. Only they believed in God. And there was a highway. A great leader chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of Pharaoh's court. A highway opened before the feet of those wretched slaves. It led out across a wilderness which to this day is traveled by few—hot and waterless. Forty years they wandered there. But it was a highway from slavery to deliverance, and the Jews never afterwards forgot that decisive moment in the history of their people.

### *'A HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD'*

It is nearly one thousand years later when the word about the highway rings out again in the Bible. Now the Jews are exiles in Babylon, an unhappy band huddled beneath the walls of a city which was a wonder of the ancient world. They had nothing except that they believed in God. Once again a prophet raised up the word about the highway. He heard a voice crying, "Make level in the desert a highway for our God!" He saw Babylon falling, the exiles delivered, the Jews marching home across the desert following their God.

But even then all their glorious dreams were not fulfilled, and there is yet a third place in the Bible where the word about the highway is taken up. It is in connection with the coming of Jesus Christ. Again the people were suffering, this time as an oppressed province in the mighty Roman Empire. Was there no way out? Yes, there was. Mark tells us that the voice of one was heard crying in the desert in the spirit of Isaiah the prophet, "Make the way ready for the Lord, level the paths for him." John the Baptist prepared the way and Jesus Christ came walking up the new highway. Once again it seemed as if it were a dead end street. The rough timbers of a cross closed the end of that street. He died there, nailed up on them. But he went on and the highway has gone on and on, through the centuries, around the world, with millions walking on it, following him, the Pioneer of their faith.

On the basis of the text about the highway I wish to draw three conclusions.

### *ALWAYS, A HIGHWAY!*

First, no matter how apparently hopeless a situation may be, there can be a highway. In A. D. 1453 Constantinople fell. That century had opened with the boundless cruelty of Tamerlane, the descendant and successor of Genghis Khan. When his threat was removed, the Turks were free to move against Constantinople. Constantinople was the capital which Constantine had built as a new sacred city to replace

old pagan Rome. A later Christian emperor had raised above its skyline the magnificent dome of one of the most beautiful churches in all Christendom, Santa Sophia. When Constantinople fell to Mohammed II, it was therefore the very center and symbol of eastern Christianity that fell. The route to the Orient was blocked, and Christians were bottled up in western Europe. By all outward appearances this event should have marked the beginning of the end of Western civilization. Actually it meant only the end of the Middle Ages and the transition to modern history. For there was a highway across the pathless, forbidden Atlantic, and in less than forty years Columbus had pioneered it.

In 1890 the United States Federal Census Bureau announced that the American frontier had disappeared. In the world's last great, new country the last frontier was gone. But see the amazing frontiers which were opened to mankind within the next ten years. In 1893 Henry Ford made the first automobile, in 1895 Roentgen discovered the x-ray, in 1896 Marconi invented wireless telegraphy, and in 1898 the Curies discovered radium.

Somewhat more than thirty years ago a boy was born out in Kansas and while still a small boy the schoolhouse that he attended burned down and he was terribly hurt. At first the doctor said, "He will never walk again." Later the doctor said, "He will never walk unless there is a miracle." The boy struggled along, first on crutches, then on a cane. Then he followed the plow across the field, walking by leaning on it. Then he began to run, a little at a time, to test and strengthen his legs. For the boy who was never to walk again there opened a highway—yes, a race track. That boy was Glenn Cunningham, and four years ago at Dartmouth he ran the fastest mile of all time. I conclude that God's last word written across the universe and human life is not "Dead End Street," but "There can be a highway."

### *JESUS THE ONLY SURE GUIDE*

My second conclusion is that we have the very best chance of finding a highway if we are following Jesus Christ. The immediately preceding illustrations may have seemed to be completely secular. Actually they are not as secular as they seem. No less thoroughgoing a historian than Kenneth Scott Latourette discusses that amazing expansion of frontiers which was carried out by Columbus and other explorers and asks concerning the reason back of it, "Is it in part the confidence and the emancipation of the human spirit which are from the legacy of Jesus . . .?"

I spoke of the work of science in opening new frontiers when a last geographical frontier had disappeared. No less creative a thinker than John Macmurray says of science, in his book, *The Clue to History:* "Science, in its own field, is the product of Christianity, and its most adequate expression so far." He means that science is really carrying out the idea of Jesus' words, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." And for the future, lest scientific instruments be used forevermore for destruction, what we need is not less but more of the guidance of Jesus Christ on the pathway of science.

In the impressive words of Pitirim A. Sorokin: "Now when our Sensate culture is in agony; when its product is poison gas rather than fresh air; when through its achievements it has given into man's hands terrific power over nature and the social and cultural world, without providing him with self-control, . . . it is becoming increasingly dangerous to mankind itself and to all its values. And for the same reasons for which a bomb or gun in the hands of a child or an imbecile is dangerous for himself and for others. The most urgent need of our time is the man who can control himself and his lusts, who is compassionate to all his fellow men, who can see and seek for the eternal values of culture and society, and who deeply feels his unique responsibility in this universe." What we need is not less but more of the guidance of Jesus Christ.

### *'IT DEPENDS UPON THE END'*

In the third place I conclude that we should choose carefully the road on which we are starting, looking toward the end to which it leads. All that I said at the outset about pathways which end in disillusionment is true. There are in our universe both dead end streets and great thoroughfares. As a matter of fact Jesus told us that it is easier to get on a dead end street than on a highway. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat," said he, but, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

In the first year of Hitler's power, out in a suburb of Berlin I sat across the desk from Martin Niemöller. Even then he was beginning to recognize an insidious threat to the Christian faith which he loved and preached, and in the spirit of that other Martin—Martin Luther—he was beginning to say, "Here I stand, I can do no other." A few years went by and Martin Niemöller went to the concentration camp. Thereupon his aged father, Heinrich Niemöller, a pastor before him, emerged from retirement and began to preach across Germany. His age and his carefully chosen yet unmistakable words made it possible for him to continue to preach until he died a few months ago. His most famous sermon had as its central idea, *Es kommt auf das Ende an,* "It depends upon the end." In this sermon he told the story of Napoleon's mother who once said to him, "Son, you think you are Napoleon, the world conqueror. But you have an anxious mother who asks you where you will end up, what will your outcome be?" Before he died Heinrich Niemöller said to a friend of mine: "Yes, it is a terrible thing to have a son in a concentration camp. . . . But there would be something more terrible for us: if God had needed a faithful martyr and our Martin had been unwilling."

### *AT THE END OF THE WAY*

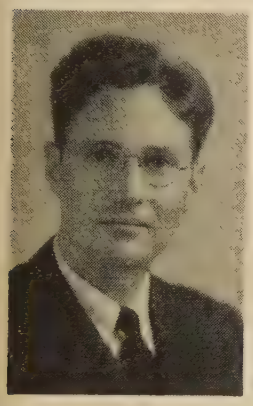
It is possible to stand in arrogance, ruthlessness and power but have behind one an anxious mother and ahead a dead end street. It is possible to stand on a

far narrower road, one straitened even to the point of being a concentration camp, and have behind one a proud and happy father and mother, ahead of one on the upward road a mighty Master, and at the end of the way a great vindication.

# Except Our Righteousness Exceeds

By Hugh Stevenson Tigner

FOR twelve minutes this morning I am going to talk to you on the subject that you have come to expect chapel speakers to expatiate upon these days.* I am going to talk about "the crisis," and the first thing I want to say about it is that it didn't come by accident.



This tragedy in which we are all caught is a tragedy of human character. In literature a tragedy is a drama in which certain terrible things happen as a matter of logic and necessity. A Hamlet, a Macbeth, a Lear are destroyed because they have the seeds of destruction within their beings. That is what I mean when I say that the present crisis is a tragedy. It came upon our world because the people in our world behaved in certain ways. Our present is the logical outcome of our past. Men are getting out of history today what they put into history yesterday. And this same principle is going to keep on working, it will never stop working: we shall get out of history tomorrow what we are putting into it today. That's an old-fashioned law, but it is a law: you can't beat it, and you can't change it.

### 'BRAVE NEW WORLD'

Some twenty years ago men had a chance to build a brave new world, a world containing a new degree of peace, freedom and justice. If that is putting it a little too optimistically, let's say that at least they had a chance to stop the downward spiraling of Western civilization. You are familiar with that fact; but have you ever stopped to think about the meaning of it? Just as people in the Allied nations in the midst of the Second World War are talking now about a new order after the shooting stops, so people in the Allied nations in the midst of the First World War talked then about a new order after the shooting should stop. And they juggled the very same words that we are juggling—"peace," "freedom," "justice." But when the boat left for this new port some twenty years ago, nobody was on it! That is a fact worth thinking about, is it not?

But when I suggest thinking about it, I don't mean getting mad about it. It does no good whatever to run wildly up and down the shore screaming invectives at your elders for missing the boat twenty years ago. That is the uncreative, the hysterical, the neurotic thing to do. You are not facing your problems when you do that; you are merely looking for a scapegoat on which to blame your problems. You are not thinking, you are not solving any difficulty, you are doing nothing helpful, positive or creative. If the boat was missed twenty years ago, that boat is gone. Working ourselves into an angry dither about that would mean that we should not even see the next boat when it comes, let alone being prepared to board it. There is no point in knowing anything about the past, if we don't use that knowledge to search our own souls in the present. If an older generation missed the boat, a younger generation can do the same. We had better do our worrying about the second matter, not the first. We can do nothing about yesterday; we can do something about tomorrow —if we do it today.

### AFTER THE 'GREAT CRUSADE'

Why did mankind miss the boat after the First World War? They missed it because they had no disposition to travel to the place where that boat was going. Nobody seemed particularly desirous of starting out on a long hard voyage after the long hardships of the Great War. They were tired of crusades, tired of sacrifices, tired of ideals; they wanted to dump their heavy burden of moral tension.

If you ask me how I know so much about what people felt and thought at that time, the answer is that you will find their tempers amply documented by what people did and said during the 1920's and '30's. During that era there went on an undisciplined and disordered expression of selfish appetites, unholy whims and moral rebelliousness such as takes place only when civilizations are in the advanced stages of decay. The great game everybody was playing was the game of getting ahead, of getting by, of having fun; of seeking pleasure, wealth, luxury, social position—every form of material satisfaction and self-aggrandizement. The ruling philosophy of life was a combination of rankest materialism, on the practical side, and, on the intellectual side, of cynical discrediting of every moral principle, every noble aspiration and conscientious scruple. The difference between right and wrong, between moral good and evil, became blurred in our minds, and wasn't considered of primary importance anyhow. The leadership and the statesmanship of the world were simply reflections of those attitudes and values.

### PRESENT LIVES AND FUTURE HOPES

There were a few men of course who recognized the situation for what it was, and who were concerned about it. One of those who realized that mankind was "playing golf across the burned hills of hell" was an Englishman by the name of C. E. Montague, who wrote a book in 1922 called *Disenchantment*. In that book Montague pointed out that men had no reason for entertaining any high hopes about the future on the basis of the kind of lives they were leading. He saw no promise of a better world in people given over

*This chapel talk was given in Gunnison Memorial Chapel, St. Lawrence University, Canton, N. Y.

to selfish ambitions, trivial pursuits and cynical attitudes. He was right.

Montague went on to say that all the advanced architecture of civilization has been built out of the myriad bricks of humdrum decencies, of plain rightness in action, of simple devotion to old-fashioned principles, patiently practiced through millions of undistinguished lives. "And now," he added, "just when there seems to be such a babble as never before about these grandiose structures, bricks have run short." What a disarmingly simple statement that was: "There won't be any grand new structure without the bricks to build it with!" It was one of those truths so undistinguished in appearance that we walk along without seeing them until we fall over them and bruise ourselves.

It is that truth which I would like to leave in your minds. A new order of things (if it is to be brought forth on this scarred earth), a better civilization (if it is to be built) has to be built out of human material, out of the minds and hearts and wills and souls of persons.

### *'COMMON FOLKS'—KEY TO THE FUTURE*

It is no accident that Western civilization was saved from collapse and extinction at the end of the Middle Ages by a moral-spiritual movement called "the Reformation," which brought a return to moral principles in the lives of millions of people. It is no accident that our American forefathers, who brought forth on this continent a nation filled with new promises to mankind, were "puritans." If we do not go down into another Dark Age in the not distant future, it will be because a sizable body of common folks, like you and me, decide within their souls to become new and better people, much better than people have been in the recent past. There will have to be a new dedication to moral principles. There will have to be more people who realize that there are such things as moral laws which cannot be flouted without self-destruction; who recognize that righteousness is more valuable than riches; who do not regard duty as a horrid word; who find joy in the fulfillment of responsibility; who have acquired self-discipline, and who have come to seek something higher in life than their own pleasure.

Until you sense an inner transformation of this kind taking place within yourself and within the beings of your fellows, don't expect anything new or better in tomorrow's world, except bigger and better calamities; for there will be no basis for anything better.

## Free Enterprise

THREE workmen fashioning a cross
On which the fourth must die!
Yet none of any other asked,
"And why? And why? And why?"

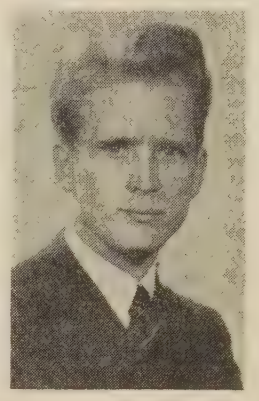
Said they: "This is our business,
Our living we must earn;
What happens to the other man
Is none of our concern!"

CLYDE MCGEE.

# Crossing the Street

BY DUNCAN E. LITTLEFAIR

WE have for our Scripture reading the story of Jesus brought before Pilate. It is one of the dramatic high points of all history. Like all great action it is significant because it is charged with emotion generated through the conflict of personality, motive and ideal. Like all significant action it can be told over and over again for always there is something new to be found in it.



We owe Pilate a little more consideration than we usually give to him. He was not an altogether bad person. He was the governor of this province of Rome and he had a high responsibility. Always there were these trouble-makers roaming the country inciting the emotional Jews to disturbing action. Revolutionaries were in abundance. Ordinarily they could be disposed of without any fuss at all. And they were! But here in Jerusalem it was "holy week" and the Jews were at fever pitch. Pilate had the order of this country as his task. He was required to keep the peace. And keep it he would no matter how many executions it required. And yet when this man Jesus was brought before him charged with the fault of arousing the mob, Pilate tried to get him to deny the accusation and go free. Pilate liked Jesus. And I am sure that he despised those Jews who asked for the pardon of Barabbas. Nevertheless, Jesus went to his death.

### *THE CRIME OF LETTING THINGS HAPPEN*

We have been accustomed to speak of Pilate as the man who sent Jesus to his death. But that is wrong. Pilate didn't *send* Jesus to death. He *allowed* him to go. And therein is his fault. He should stand in history, not as the man who committed a great crime but as the man who let it happen.

Pilate's action was natural, easily accepted, and in accordance with good common sense. He was not responsible for Jesus. He didn't bring him into custody and he didn't convict him. He simply carried out his job as governor. And yet because he sensed that there was something more than his job that he could do he stands as a monumental failure.

His sin and his crime are great even though he conformed to the accepted common sense pattern of action. It is that which makes his sin so insidious. Man is not dragged down by the obvious gross sins but by the border-line cases. No one in a decent community sanctions crime or sin in its gross form. It is not these obvious sins which degrade us but the sins which are not so obvious, not even obvious as sin!

Most of our life is lived in a regular routine which conforms to the socially accepted standards of our society. The pattern here is clear and sharply outlined.

Only a few deviate and they are the socially outcast. In addition to this there is in every life the area of the ideals toward which we strive. This is for the most part personal and private. Here sin plays no part. But in between these two areas and connecting them is a large shadowy area of indecision and doubt. It is in this area that we sin most dangerously. For here no one can accuse us of sin except our own selves. If we simply conform to the regular pattern rather than follow the suggestions of the ideal there is no one to accuse us, but we have nevertheless sinned in a subtle and deadly way. And if we go on doing this, turning down the ideal in favor of the more comfortable standard, we destroy ourselves; for we destroy our souls. An Old Testament writer said that it is the little foxes which eat away the hedge. In like manner it is the quiet, insidious sin which hurts the most. Pilate stands before us as a glittering example of this sin.

### *THE DEADLIEST SIN*

This attitude was condemned by Jesus. Do you remember the story of the Good Samaritan? The story didn't bother to condemn the thieves who attacked the traveler. Any decent persons would condemn them. Jesus didn't waste his time on such things. The story is told to bring before the bar of higher justice the two altogether righteous people who passed by on the other side of the street. They had not injured the poor wretch lying at the side of the road. They were not responsible for his condition. But they could have done something and didn't do it. So they stand before us in shame.

This deadly sin is made even clearer in the story of the Last Judgment. Not those who did wrong but those who failed to do right, is the theme. I was hungry and ye fed me not. I was naked and ye clothed me not. There are many things we do which we ought not to do but these are gross sins and of little significance in comparison with the things we do not when we ought.

I think this was important to Jesus, not only because his sensitive spirit knew how it could blight, but because it came close to himself. Why did Jesus leave his home and his friends and his comfortable village to preach the message of God? He was a fine human type of person who could have been happy with his friends and his work. Certainly there is no joy in carrying the cross upon which you are to be nailed. Why then did he do it? He did it because he had to.

### *THOSE WHO 'CROSSED THE STREET'*

Since Jesus acted in this way, countless men and women have gone out from their comfortable routine to cross the street and take on themselves something which did not belong to them. Stephen stoned to death attempting to carry a message to his fellow Jews. Peter and Paul thrown to the lions because they attempted to serve an alien people far from their own homes. And in later times Florence Nightingale, Livingstone, Schweitzer, Jane Addams, Kagawa. . . .

Why do men do this? Can you explain the phenomenon? A famous ethicist asked: "Why should I prefer to have my finger pricked rather than see ten thousand people perish?" Well, why should he? It is his finger, but as for these other people, what are they to him? Why should a man suffer for another? Why should any man offer up the only life he is sure he will have for the sake of an ideal? Why should countless thousands sacrifice themselves to save liberty, freedom or democracy for others?

Now, you hard-headed, materialistic, seemingly selfish people tell me why you and other men do this? For you do. There is not an individual in this congregation who has not felt a sense of obligation where he could prove none. It is something in the spirit of man from which we cannot escape. We are condemned to nobility. When you begin to wonder about the existence of God stop for a moment and consider this fact we are discussing. No person should ever have doubts about the existence of God. We do now, and perhaps we should, because we are poorly trained and poorly educated. But this fact should become so much a part of our consciousness that to doubt God would be impossible. For this compulsion is the power of God in human life. He is the drive from within and the pull from without that makes us do these "foolish" things. The more responsibility we feel for people, events and causes apart from our immediate selves the more mature, the more godly, the more human we are. Responsibility is of the nature of man. It is what makes him man. It is God himself acting through man.

### *THE MYSTERY OF THE HEART OF MAN*

In conclusion I am going to take the risk of reading to you a rather lengthy quotation from "Pulvis et Umbra," an essay by Robert Louis Stevenson:

"What a monstrous specter is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing upon hair-like grass, fitted with sharp eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming; and yet looked at nearlier, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives; who should have blamed him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues; infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty; the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbor, to his God: an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame, below which if it be possible, he will not stoop."

The thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbor, to his God. So he crossed the street and took on himself the responsibility.

# Let's 'Scrap' Our Selfish Habits

A Children's Sermon

By Harleigh M. Rosenberger

EVERYONE is interested just now in collecting scrap metal. The newspapers urge us to save every bit of old metal that we can. Our government tells us that this can be remelted and made into new products. And so we gather all of the old pots and pans, the buckets and boilers, the cans and containers that we can find and we give them to the junk man. Already several folk, including two small boys, have been at my door asking whether I had any worn-out metal utensils that I wished to discard. And it has been a fine project. For the homes in the community have become rid of all that old junk that used to be in the cellar and the attic and, as a result, our community is a better place to live. Then, too, that old metal was converted into bright new metal that could be used for many articles.

Now, it may seem strange, but did you know that we folks often gather a great deal of junk as we go through life? Yes, junk that is seen mostly in the form of habits. These junky habits clutter up our lives and make our personalities unpleasant to other people. And many times, with very little effort, we could easily convert them into very useful and pleasing habits. I am thinking of a boy who is very selfish. He never shares his toys, seldom helps his friends when they have work to do, always wants to be pitcher when they play baseball. As a result, he is unpopular even though he wants to be "one of the boys." He should scrap those selfish habits, throw them out and mold them into new ones that will help him share and make him more gracious.

I know of a little girl too who never says "Thank you" or "Pardon me" or "Please." She isn't invited to many parties and she wonders why it is. Perhaps she should scrap that pile of bad habits, habits that the finer young men and women have discarded long before they reached her age.

### *BEWARE OF BARNACLES!*

As a ship plies its way back and forth across the ocean, a fungus growth called a barnacle begins to form on that part of the hull that lies beneath the water. At regular intervals the ship must stop in a drydock and have these hundreds of barnacles that cling to the hull removed, else they hinder the ship's speed. These habits that we collect are many times like barnacles; they hold us back in life. Don't you agree with me that these should be discarded?

Do you have any habits that are unpleasant to other people? Do you have any that might hold you back as you grow up into manhood and womanhood? If you do, it would be well to scrap them now and mold them into better habits. Why not celebrate the New Year by doing that?

When we see that slogan, telling us to get in the scrap for Uncle Sam, let's ask ourselves whether or not we have any scrap about our lives that should be thrown out and shaped anew.

# A Pastoral Prayer

By Wallace Cedarleaf

HEAVENLY FATHER, in whom we live and move and have our being, behold us drawn together by a deep yearning: our natures are diverse, but our need is one. Gather us close to Thee at this hour of prayer.

Out of the turmoil of the week, out of the dust and din of daily life, out of our troubles, out of the cheap and trivial things of the passing hour, we come to hear Thy still small voice. Transform our lives from what they are to that which they ought to be. Unite us in a new love, a new grace of service and a new happiness of obedience. Make us to know that between us and Thee there is nothing but our own blindness of heart.

Our prayers, O Lord, reach out to all peoples of the earth. May all feel the nearness of Thy love and care. Strengthen the fainting hearts, speak to the listening ears. All are brothers in Thy sight. May we spread Thy bond of fellowship to all Thy children everywhere. We pray for all races of men. Those in bondage, may they be freed. Those in pain, may they be relieved. Those who are experiencing great sorrow, may they feel Thine everlasting arms about them.

O God, bless the leaders of our nation. In their hands rests today the responsibility for grave decisions. May they realize their dependence upon Thee. May Thy Word be a lamp unto their feet and a light to their path.

We feel unworthy of all Thy blessings, heavenly Father. Forgive us our repeated sins, remove from every heart the lurking grudge, and open in our lives new vistas of strength and beauty and love which may be sources of refuge in this trying hour.

We thank Thee for our church and seek Thy continued blessing upon it. May we who claim Thy name ever live our lives in constant touch with Thee, our Source of strength, so that our daily walks may show forth the precepts of Thy Son and our Savior, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

# Sermon Outlines *from* PULPIT Readers

### This Day of Judgment

*Texts: When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.—Isa. 26:9. The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God.—1 Peter 4:17.*

I. *Introduction*—We are living in a day of judgment. The church has recently had little to say about this aspect of Christian faith. In early days it was stressed. Augustine, Calvin, Edwards. Why have we neglected judgment? Philosophy since the industrial revolution, the amazing development of science, our machine civilization have given us confidence in ourselves. It's up to us—why bother with God?

II. *Body of Sermon*—1. We are being awakened to the fact that when man ventures to live by bread alone, God steps in, reminding him that there is a moral law that he cannot evade. Let him break that law, and he will be broken by it. Men are now standing at the bar of judgment to hear the decree of the Judge of nations. There is no appeal. We say we are at a "crisis" in the world's history. That word "crisis" comes from a Greek word meaning "judgment." Here is the judgment today, because of man's pride, cocksureness: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge hath perverted thee. For thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee." (Isaiah) 2. But this day of judgment is not a day for pessimism and despair. It challenges us to muster our moral resources in the confidence that we can prepare for a better day. We can be saved. What can save us? (a) Repentance. Convinced that we cannot save ourselves, we must acknowledge God's sufficiency. The burden of repentance is upon the church. She is the prodigal of modern culture, and must now say, "I will arise and go to my Father." (b) A revival of old-fashioned self-discipline, as that of our pioneer fathers, who faced hardship. We must give up soft and easy ways, and develop moral stamina. The enemies of human freedom—Germany, Italy, Japan—have disciplined themselves, and have gained power. But ours must be a self-imposed discipline, from the soul. "Let him deny himself, take up his cross." This call to discipline is to every Christian, every church. (c) Renewal of faith in God and his purpose to create a united humanity. Science has done much to unify the world. Who can deny the urgency to complete its work—to bring about a family of nations?

III. *Conclusion*—The church faces the mightiest challenge of its history. If the church fails, all fails. But the church cannot fail if its faith in God stands sure. "He will not fail nor be discouraged until he hath set justice in the earth." Men of good will today must lay the foundations of a just and durable peace on the principles of brotherhood, that God's will may be done in earth as it is done in heaven.

*(James Macpherson, Broadway Baptist Church, Denver, Colo.)*

### What Do You See?

*Text: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. — Ephesians 1:18.*

I. *Introduction*—There is a sense in which it is true that only that is real to us which our power of vision enables us to see. We see in a person, place or thing that which we want to see. Says Emerson: "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not."

II. *Body of Sermon*—(1) What do you see in a tree, a cloud, falling leaves? Some see little, but one with a seeing eye says: "The poem hangs on the berry bush when comes the poet's eye." Is a primrose a primrose and "nothing more"? Is a sunset just the effect of the sun's rays' passing through particles of dust, or is Bliss Carman also right when he says, "Where the last fires of sunset burned I caught the glory of His robe"? What is a book? Pages covered with marks called letters or "the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit"? (2) What do you see in the actions and attitudes of your fellow men? Do you judge their motives? Do you see the best or worst in them? We see what we are equipped to see. Jesus saw the best in people—the saint in the sinner, Peter in Simon. According to your vision. (3) What do you see in Jesus? His critics saw in him a foe, one to be curbed. His disciples saw in him the Son and revealer of God, one to be followed.

III. *Conclusion*—Let us train our eyesight that we may see the true, the beautiful and the good, and find in the face of Jesus Christ "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."

*(Francis E. Vipond, United Church, Francis, Sask, Can.)*

## Toward Better Speech

The purpose of this department is to call attention to "slips of speech or manner" which violate good English usage or the forms of orderly and reverent worship, or even, by eccentric mannerism, divert attention from the message to the speaker, with consequent loss to his message.

A few examples:

**Israel.** Never ISS-ray-el. And never IZ-rul. Correctly, it is IZ-ray-el.

**Westminster** is frequently and improperly called West-min-ister. Minister is derived from the Anglo-Saxon, **mynster:** a monastery, or the church of a monastery. With only one "i" in the word, then, the pronunciation is WEST-min-ster, with a secondary accent on the second syllable.

**Sovereign** permits either the short "o" or the short "u" in the first syllable. However, usage has made the short "o"—SOV-er-in—refer to the English coin, while the short "u" is to be preferred in other meanings, as, "the **SUV-er-in** God."

**Saith** is often heard as SAY-ETH; the correct pronunciation is SETH.

**Often** is a gross offender. The "t" must be left out in speech, making it OF-n.

What errors would you like to see corrected? Your contributions to this department, sent in care of the **Pulpit** or to the undersigned (Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, W. Va.), will be considered for use in later issues.

AUBREY N. BROWN.

# What Will Happen in the Churches?

By Hugh Chamberlin Burr

THERE is evidence aplenty today that a serious shortage of vital Christianity is to be found in almost every area where one may look. How to overcome it! Were we sure that what we have been doing was effective in soul-winning, in Christian education, in training in personal devotions, in developing Christian vision, character and stamina, the answer would be simply more of the same thing—only much more. Doubt, however, has arisen in most candid minds of whatever theological slant, whether the projects and programs in which we are engaged are now able to accomplish the purpose for which they were designed.

And just at this point comes the war! (This, of course, is not a coincidence. It is a consequence.) What with tire and gasoline and oil and coffee rationing, and many other wartime restrictions sure to come, many are wondering "what will happen to the churches."

If the unusual conditions of today cause us to stop short and look about us and within us and above us, what at first may appear to be a calamity may become a blessing. For I submit that in these momentous days it is not what happens *to* churches so much as what happens *in* churches that will be of lasting importance.

Have we not missed the mark? That is not merely failure. Literally it is sin, *hamartia*. Must we not think again? That is repentance, *metanoia*. But how can we change our minds unless in our thinking a new element is present? That new element must be a deepened understanding of the requirements and the resources of Almighty God, achieved through a new awareness of God himself.

### ● *Rethinking Our Religion*

First of all, these days should lead us to rethink the Christian religion, re-evaluate our part in it, and, if necessary, revise the programs and even the purposes in which we spend ourselves. This may have many and enormous personal consequences.

Let us be clear. Our task as ministers is not primarily to win the war, nor to lead our communities, nor even to run our churches. It is to mediate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our greatest need, therefore, is more constant contact and a closer relationship with God himself. James Moffatt has reminded us: "You and I are not like a group of men upon a lonely moor, kneeling down to prevent a little spot of fire being blown out by the great winds of the world. The Christian church is not nervously engaged in trying to prevent the extinction of Christianity; it is in far wiser hands than ours as it has always been. What you and I have to do is to keep in touch with the fire. The fire will always burn."

If we conceive our chief tasks to be that of keeping close to the heavenly

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fire, in order to bring others likewise close to it, we face the necessity of modifying the expenditure of our own time and energy in the light of our purpose.

### ● *Revising Our Programs*

Perhaps the best way to clarify this point is to raise half a dozen questions looking to the revising of our programs.

First. Should not a pastor's days include much more thoughtful reading—on life and death, the faith, personality needs, history, theology—in order that he may be able to interpret the events of today, not in a cliché, but in the light of eternity? (Mediation is dependent on meditation. It is not a matter of expense but of emphasis.) The Religious Book Club's amazingly helpful lists available for any who will buy a handful of books a year, and book clubs, theological lending libraries and public libraries bring the material within the financial reach of everyone.

Second. Would it not be well to divide up the names of a church membership in such a way that every individual connected with it could be prayed for by the pastor personally and intimately once each quarter, or half-year, or year—a real intercessory prayer? Who else will do this if the pastor does not? And is there any substitute for prayer?

Third. Should not a pastor make a point of having some definitely spiritual conversations every day, by way of stimulating the "growth in grace" of the one with whom he is talking. John Timothy Stone used this method—of brief appointments, pointed conversation and prayer—with great effect among his laymen.

Fourth. Cannot the whole organizational life of many churches be simplified and its base broadened by having fewer board or committee meetings, by bringing into them supplementary workers for new realistic tasks, and by remembering in every meeting that time is precious, that mere talk is not work, and that plans are not a substitute for results?

Fifth. Could not the expectation of the minister's presence at community programs be met in many cases by sending a layman or laywoman to represent the minister, and thus free him for more personal and spiritual ministries?

Sixth. When a minister is given a leave of absence, for example to enter the chaplaincy, provision has to be made to carry on much routine by laymen. Suppose a minister asked for a leave of absence in order to devote himself to the unsaved, the untaught and the unadjusted, would not some churches respond at once to such a challenge, and others, moved by their example, soon follow?

To rethink, re-evaluate and revise our activities and emphases is neither comfortable nor easy. But can anyone truthfully say to himself that it is not imperative? There is good biblical precedent in the sixth chapter of Acts for keeping necessary routine and spiritual ministrations in proper functional perspective. If in our day they have gotten out of balance, is not now the time to restore that balance?

### ● *Challenging Some Church Customs*

"Challenge every custom," is our second emphasis. Ask yourself in regard to every program if it is producing the complete results for which it was designed. Einstein was led to the discovery of relativity through challenging an axiom. God has ever "ful-

filled himself in many ways lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Worship services don't have to be an hour and a quarter long, or to begin at ten-thirty or eleven, or to contain always a spoken message. Nor is a great variety of hymns essential. It is far better to sing a few hymns with enthusiasm and vigor because they are known by heart even unto the third and fourth stanzas, than to mumble all over a hymnbook. If not already a part of a service, why not insert some great spiritual affirmation to be spoken by the people in unison? Why not develop unison prayers and unison responses that are not trickles of sound, but the unrestrained voice of the people speaking with God?

The weekly bulletin, or order of service, might be given up entirely! What is its true purpose? If it is intimate contact of the pastor with all his people, that could be established much more effectively through a periodic letter on the great Christian themes of faith, or courage, or hope. Not a word of the usual promotional sort about coming to church, or the need for money.

This may be the time to find again the lost values of the evening service. For when the evening service ceased in all too many churches, there went with it an informality and fellowship and especially a responsiveness which have never been recovered in the brighter light of day. "Sunday at Seven" has recently become in one community a symbol potent enough to bring together men in large numbers, in spite of the counter "attractions" of radio and of the movies. It need not be a solitary case.

Nor should we fail to consider services at other hours and on other days, just because they are not customary. They might prove valuable.

### ● *A Letter from a Layman*

Point to the suggestion of uncustomary hours comes from a recent experience in our city. It all came about because a layman wrote a letter to his pastor. That in itself is unusual, but this letter is even more so. In it the layman—who by the way is a banker and one of the truly leading citizens in the community—challenged an axiom. Part of the letter follows:

"May we not need, much more even than in normal times, a further development of our spiritual emotions? 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' In thinking about this problem, a suggestion comes to mind which I am passing on to you for what it may be worth.

"Many business men do not attend church regularly on Sunday. I am one of them. I did over a long period of years but some years ago I got out of the church-going habit. That does not mean that I have become a heathen. I have just been a backslider and a Sunday loafer. There are others like me. In normal times possibly we, the backsliders, do not feel the lack of religious stimulation as we do in times of stress and strain. At times such as we are passing through, the real values of life become more apparent.

"Why not offer to the business men of Rochester an opportunity to gather in midweek for a half-hour of religious devotional service? A small committee could be selected to act more as a sponsoring than as a directing committee. You would give a fifteen to twenty-minute 'little sermon' . . . no comments regarding our all-out war effort, but rather a call to the service of God and to the giving of one's self for the common good."

In consequence of this letter, a group of men is promoting a noonday meeting, not by modern publicity devices, but simply by word of mouth, and asking of the minister only that he preach on the great things of God.

### ● *Community Cooperation Called for Today*

Cooperation with other churches and ministers of the community, far beyond anything we have known, is one of the answers to the times. This may be of two sorts, informal and formal. Both have their place.

Informal cooperation will seek to provide release from the over-burdenedness which, in spite of all of our efforts, will still be upon us. Two or more churches could develop union midweek, or Sunday evening, or even Sunday morning services. That would reduce the preaching load and undoubtedly raise the general level of the product. In a group or a community, ministers could prepare in turn the weekly letter to their people suggested above, all using the same letter each week, but each sending it to his own people over his own signature. Or one especially gifted could produce all the letters, the others rendering an equivalent service.

In addition there should be much and frequent counseling with brother ministers, a realistic pooling of experiences. Not necessarily in ministerial association meetings, which are too often deadly because of their all too prevailing pattern — slow gathering, courtesy laughter, careless devotions and a "paper." An informal conference, posing a common problem and eliciting brief experiences that have been helpful or harmful, thus bringing light upon perplexities that are well-nigh universal, is probably the most effective method.

### ● *'Togetherness' Promoted by Organization*

Formal cooperation involves a simple organization of the churches of a community or area. Only so can two necessary results be achieved. The united organizations form the framework by means of which people think of themselves as "together." Unquestionably the peace of the world now waits for a framework by means of which people everywhere may know that they belong to the world as well as to their respective nations. For the same reason an interdenominational organization is needed that Christians may be able to think of themselves as belonging both to their own church and to the church of Christ in their community.

Such an organization is also needed as an instrument for that phase of Christian activity which has too long been neglected—cooperative community Christianity. "The whole task of the whole church" is still "to give the whole gospel to the whole world." That means that each of the three areas of Christian activity is as necessary as each leg of a three-legged stool.

### ● *Larger Tasks of the Churches*

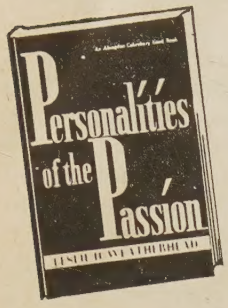
There is the work carried on in the local church. This, obviously, is absolutely essential. Danger lies more in its over- than in its under-emphasis. Then there is the distant work carried out through churches grouped in denominations. This, too, is absolutely essential. Would that every Christian had been taught so to recognize it! The third area of Christian activity is the churches organized to evangelize the entire community in which they are located. This, too, is absolutely essential, although the last to be recognized as such.

The tasks to be done have posed problems which simply cannot be solved through the service of single churches, however broad and effective, nor even through the sum of the services of single churches. Every community that boasts of a chamber of commerce or a community chest—and thousands of them do—should certainly have also a council of churches, in order to provide the framework by means of which Christians may think of themselves as together, and may do what can be done only together.

### ● *Finally, Let Us Turn to God*

When we face the times we are in, and know not which way to turn, we can but turn to God. And when the traditional and the customary fail in our day, whatever they may have done in the past to produce the ends they were designed to serve, let us, by God's gift of holy imagination, find new ways of mediating the gospel of our Lord and Savior and of developing the faith and the hope and the love which are the precious fruits of that gospel.

# Personalities of the Passion

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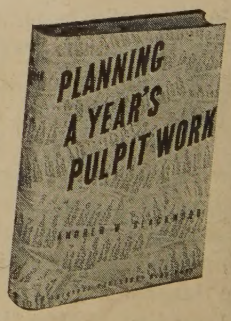


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